



The Duchess of Langeais - Honoré de Balzac

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**Honoré de Balzac**  
**Translated by Ellen Marriage**

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“The Duchess of Langeais” (1834) is part of Balzac’s great life’s work, the sprawling novel series called “The Human Comedy.” This novel is set in Paris, in the years after Napoleon’s fall and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy. In Balzac’s view, the aristocracy had squandered its chance to bring leadership and stability to France, and was instead seduced by a sense of entitlement, wasting away in “the sterility of the salons.”

We follow the story of a love affair that is frustrated by the obsessive, willful manipulations of its two principal characters. The duchess is a “spoilt child of civilization.” Her opposite is a military hero, naïve in the ways of the salon, but accustomed to winning his battles. “Love” is confused with “passion” and twisted by the elegant artifices of polite society.

Originally titled “Don’t Touch the Axe,” Balzac’s novel is a searing examination of the pathology of love, as experienced by the privileged of his day. - Summary by Bruce Pirie

**Read by Bruce Pirie. 12 Tracks. Total running time: 07:14:21**

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